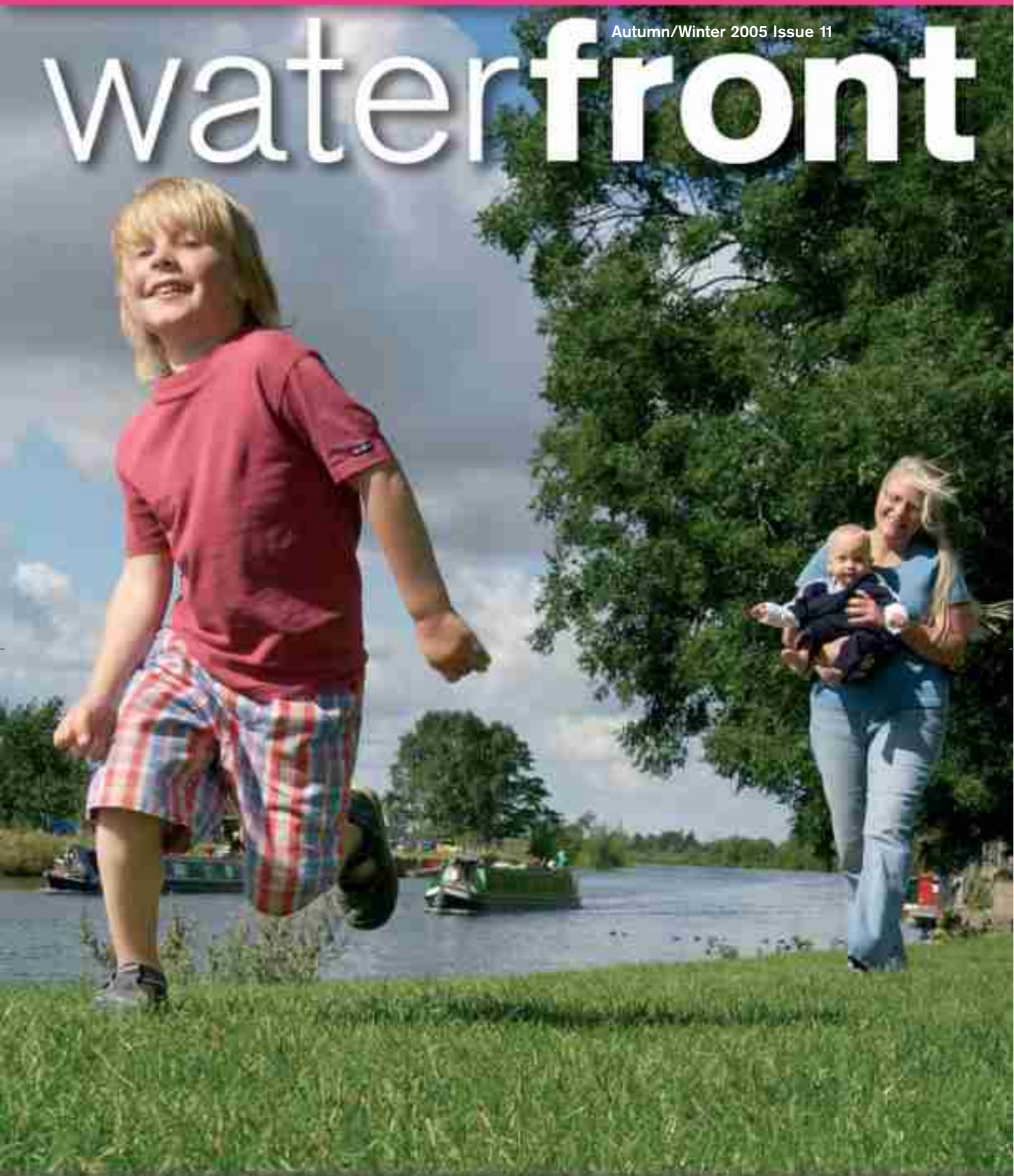
INSIDE: NEWS • LETTERS • A DAY IN THE LIFE • AND MUCH MORE

Autumn/Winter 2005 Issue 11

waterfront



WATERWAY WILDLIFE
Discover more about wildlife on the water

THE RYA
Promoting and protecting boating

THEN AND NOW
Taking a closer look at Fradley Junction

PLUS...
Special offers inside

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Welcome to the new look *Waterfront* magazine. We've updated the design for this, our fifth birthday edition, and we hope you like it.

Waterfront aren't the only ones celebrating a landmark birthday, 2005 is the bi-centenary year of two of the most iconic inland waterway structures on the network, the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Blisworth Tunnel. You've still got time to celebrate, as November sees a special birthday party for the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct. Take a look on the Waterscape.com events pages for more details.

Boating is at the core of BW's work, and in this edition we find out more about one of the UK's best known boating organisations, the Royal Yachting Association, who, despite their name, have a lot to offer the inland boater. Take a look at pages 22 to 23 to find out what they do.

Having a range of boats on the waterways is what makes them so special, but perhaps you'll agree with me that the best bit about boating is the opportunity it gives you to get really close to nature. On page 10 *Waterfront* explores some of the ways BW looks after waterway wildlife and describes how we can all contribute through the national Wildlife Survey.

And finally, did you know that National Boat Check Week starts on 7 November. So if you've got a licence please display it. There's more information about The Check on page 4, along with plenty more updates about what's happening in BW and out on the waterways. Enjoy the read!

Gillian Owen
Editor

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Front Cover: Trent Lock, River Trent

getting into the great outdoors

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Visit the UK's largest show for people who love the great outdoors

Showcasing an extensive selection of boats, caravans, motorhomes, tents, camping equipment, holiday parks, destinations, leisure vehicles and outdoor leisure products, the National Boat Caravan & Outdoor Show 2006 will offer an even greater choice of product and outdoors activities for all ages to enjoy. The 2006 show will have the largest boating selection ever seen at the NEC – so be sure not to miss the latest offerings from the Liverpool Boat Company, Severn Valley Boat Centre, Midland Canal Centre, The New Boat Company, Sea Otter Boats and Evesham Marina among others. There's also a fantastic choice of inland cruisers, RIB's, canoes, kayaks, chandlery and accessories to choose from.

Not only is it a great opportunity to see the latest from the world of outdoor leisure, you can benefit from special show only offers, enter great competitions and get free advice from the leading clubs and associations. Come to the show and discover what's new for 2006!

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Book your tickets now and save £s!* Visit the show website at **www.boatandcaravan.co.uk**

*Discounts only available in advance of 18.02.06

NEWS IN BRIEF...NEWS IN BRIEF...NEWS IN

The latest news and information about boating and BW

BOATING UPDATE

Dredging

BW has announced that throughout 2005/06 it will spend £7 million on dredging across the waterways. The investment in dredging is part of a national programme of works to bring significant improvements to BW's boating customers'. The majority of dredging will take place this autumn.

New development at Brentford

Following the closure of BW's Brentford Depot, the area became deserted. Now a £100 million regeneration scheme, due for completion in 2006, will transform the site. There will be new homes, a hotel, retail, restaurants, and offices as well as much improved boaters' facilities, including showers, laundry and toilet facilities, rubbish disposal, a water point and a new pump-out and 'elsan' station. Also planned is a chandlery, café/visitor centre, new moorings (visitor, long-term and a few residential) as well as towpath improvements to provide greater access for cyclists and pedestrians.

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E enquiries.hq@britishwaterways.co.uk

Visit www.waterscape.com

Boat Safety Scheme
T 01923 201278
F 01923 201420
E bss.enquiries@britishwaterways.co.uk

Canalphone Improvements

Canalphone, the answerphone service that reports unscheduled works and changes to the winter stoppage programme, has been improved.

Now there's just one number to call, which is sub-divided by waterway into four alphabetical groups.

This means you don't have a listen to the whole message to hear your waterway or phone two separate lines. Both of the old numbers will get you through to the updated Canalphone. **Canalphone number is 01923 201401.**

National Stoppage Programme 2005/06

All BW's engineering works (or stoppages), including unscheduled works, can be downloaded from **www.waterscape.com/boating/stoppages**.

A hard copy can also be collected from your local office or ordered from BW's Customer Service Centre, but please note unscheduled works will not be listed. Remember you can register on-line at Waterscape.com to receive email stoppage alert updates that can be accessed with WAP mobile phones.

Licence Fee Consultation

At the beginning of July BW launched its Licence Fee & Structure Consultation. The consultation document was distributed to all boating user groups and customers who will be affected by any likely change.

If any current proposals change significantly in light of views received during consultation, BW will invite further comments on any revised proposals. A report on the consultation will be available on-line at **www.britishwaterways.co.uk/accountability/consultations** in November, or for a hard copy please call the Customer Service Centre. Copies of the report will automatically be sent directly to everyone who responded to the consultation.

National Boat Check Week

BW is committed to tackling licence evasion. National Boat Check Week, starting on the 7 November will help highlight licence and mooring payment evaders.

This information will then help BW initiate action against the evaders. Local staff will be helping out the dedicated patrol officers during National Boat Check Week in an effort to cover all of BW's waterways. If you've got a licence, then please display it. If you don't display your licence, valuable time is wasted that could be focussed at real licence evaders. Previously, BW used a range of stickers to highlight licence evasion, these have been replaced with a waterproof envelope containing a patrol notice.

INLAND MARINA INVESTMENT GUIDE

In April this year BW announced a scheme to promote business opportunities for new marina developments to help meet future demand and support the growth in popularity of boating on Britain's waterways.

Head of boating development, Sally Ash explains: "The Inland Marina Investment Guide will address some of the obstacles that are currently deterring the growth in new marina developments that are needed to meet demand on our waterways. It will highlight the attractive business opportunity and provide support and information on how to progress projects as fast as possible through all stages of development."

A new web site **www.britishwaterways.co.uk/marinadevelopment** designed especially for marina developers goes live in November.

BOAT SAFETY EXAMINER ON-LINE

Are you having trouble locating a Boat Safety Scheme examiner? Did you know that you can search for an examiner near you on **www.boatsafetyscheme.com** or you can call the Boat Safety Scheme office.

UPDATED SAFETY GUIDES

Check out **www.boatsafetyscheme.com** for the updated Boat Safety Scheme guides, you can either download the sections you need or buy a new guide at Waterscape.com or call the BW Customer Service Centre.

WATER MANAGEMENT

Water is one of the planet's most precious resources, and we should all do our bit to save water. BW is very proud of the progress it has made in water management, particularly as the last 12 months have been a severe test on our water supplies and how we manage them. England and Wales experienced the second driest winter since 1953/54, and since April this year only July has had above average rainfall. Last year BW completed the season with no closures due to water shortages and this year (at the time *Waterfront* went to press) there has been just one closure on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal. Now everyone must hope that a wet winter will follow this summer. As a matter of good practice, boaters can help to save water, by:

1. **sharing locks**
2. **ensuring lock cycles are used for boats travelling in each direction**
3. **shutting all sluice gates and paddles when leaving a lock and reporting leaks**
4. **not leaving taps running at water points**

OLYMPIC CHEER

Inland waterway fans were amongst those cheering on the 6 July when it was announced that London would be hosting the 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games. Why? Well it has had a very positive impact on plans to restore the Bow Back Rivers, bringing it forward by many years. BW is looking forward to continuing to work with a whole host of organisations and partners, including the Greater London Authority and London Development Agency, to deliver the greenest and greatest Olympic Games.

GREAT OFFER

FOR *WATERFRONT* READERS

LONDON BOAT SHOW

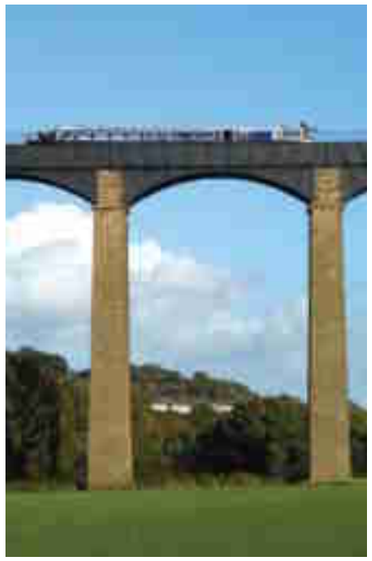
The London Boat Show is held at the ExCeL centre in London's docklands from the 6 – 15 January 2006. The Inland Waterways Feature will be returning to the Show, with a whole range of craft on display, as well as chandlery items and a traditional waterside pub. Other features include live windsurfing championships, every type of boat imaginable and plenty of boating information and accessories.

This offer means you can enjoy the show for less.

SAVE £3 off the price of a normal adult ticket (£14) when you book in advance. Simply call the ticket hotline on 0870 060 0246 and quote '*Waterfront*'

Offer valid any one day between 7-15 January, excludes Press & Preview Day.

Adult tickets only.



PONTY CELEBRATIONS

There's no better time to visit the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct on the Llangollen Canal, as 2005 is its bi-centenary year. Saturday 26 November marks 200 years to the day of its opening in 1805. An action packed day is planned with fun for all the family, there'll be a re-enactment and firework display to celebrate the birthday of this amazing structure. Check Waterscape.com for more event details.

GONGS FOR THE GUYS

Two BW people were honoured in the Queen's Birthday Honours list this summer. Tony 'Wally' Wright (pictured, below right), lock keeper at Atherstone Locks on the Coventry Canal, was awarded an MBE for services to the country's inland waterways and Jimmy Swindells, waterway supervisor, Rochdale (west), and Manchester, Bolton & Bury canals was awarded an MBE for services to the environment. Tony said: "I'm absolutely delighted; in fact I think I'm still in shock! I'm just a normal guy doing my job and to get recognised by the Queen is amazing." Jimmy also said he was 'chuffed' and went on: "But you never get these things on your own. It's all your colleagues that have helped you and those you've learnt from over the years that put you in this position. It's a great honour."

WHAT'S NEW WITH WATERSCAPE?

Waterscape.com 2.0

If you've been on-line recently you might have noticed Waterscape.com has got a new look, two years since it was first launched. It's now easier for boaters and new waterway visitors to use. Major improvements mean it's far simpler to navigate and search the site and there are new interactive maps that highlight waterways, facilities, attractions and pubs.

To try it out, go to **www.waterscape.com** and use either the map or the search box to find details on any waterway.

Save time - Renew on-line

You can now renew your boat licence on-line, just log on to **www.waterscape.com/renewal** you'll need your renewal letter to hand, along with your Boat Safety and insurance certificates, and a credit or debit card.

Boaters' Guides on-line

On-line boaters' guides are now available. Just search for the waterway you want to visit and link into the boating section on the left hand menu to find the guide of your choice. Waterscape.com and BW are actively encouraging boaters, and other visitors, to use the guide and inform them of any omissions or additional information that should be included. The guide can then be electronically updated.

Wild about wildlife?

Keep an eye out on the wildlife pages on Waterscape.com as the results of this year's BW Wildlife Survey will soon be on-line. Find out more on page 10.

BRITISH WATERWAYS CALENDAR 2006

Waterfront readers can get more than 30% off the RRP of BW's 2006 Calendar. And with less than 10 weeks until Christmas the calendar makes a great stocking filler or gift for anyone interested in the inland waterways.

The calendar retails at £6.50 (including postage & packing in the UK), but if you quote *Waterfront* it's just £4.50. To order your copy please call the BW Customer Service Centre or buy on-line at Waterscape.com.

NEW MINISTER FOR THE INLAND WATERWAYS VISITS STOURPORT

New Minister for the Inland Waterways, Jim Knight (pictured left), visited Stourport on the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal this August, where he met BW's new chairman, Tony Hales (pictured right). He was shown restoration and regeneration plans for the basins at Stourport which will improve facilities for boaters and make the basins a focal point for the town.

The Minister was given the opportunity to test his skill at handling a narrowboat as a first-hand taste of the pleasures the inland waterways have to offer. Later, he recorded a message for attendees to BW's Annual Meeting in which he stressed the public benefits that waterways can offer.

He said: "Our inland waterways are an important national asset and play a key role in improving the quality of life for us all. As the country's largest navigation authority, British Waterways has a special responsibility to maximize the benefits that they provide. British Waterways is not only conserving and improving its inland waterways but is also helping to deliver economic, environmental and social benefits to both urban and rural local communities across the country."

BW NEWS

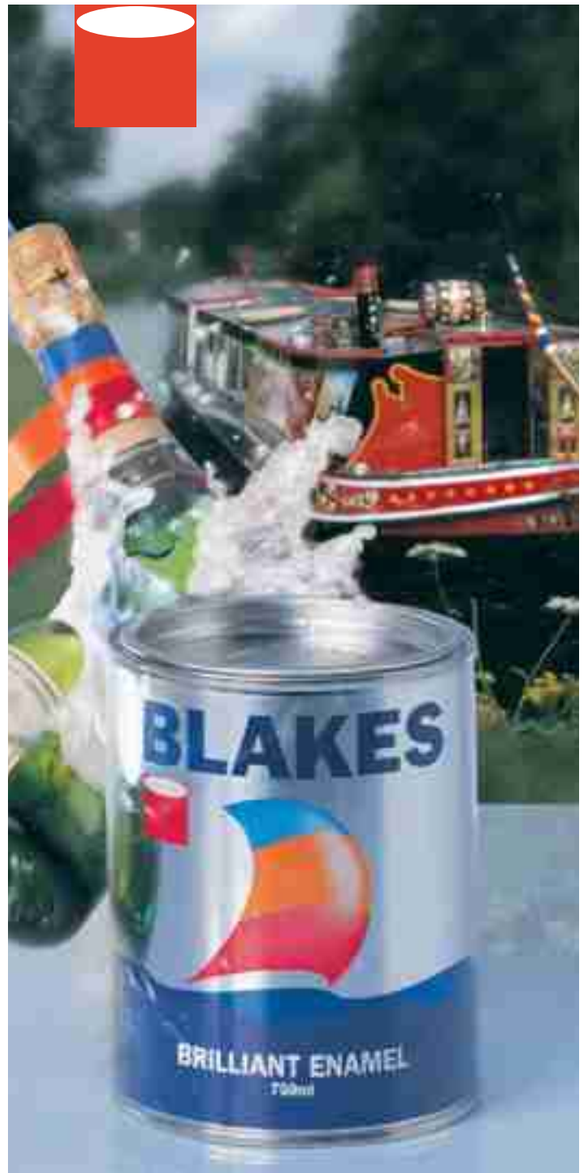
ANNUAL REPORT & ANNUAL MEETING

BW's 2004/05 Annual Report & Accounts has been published and is available on-line at **www.britishwaterways.co.uk/annualreport** or as a hard copy from BW's Customer Service Centre. This year's BW Annual Meeting took place at the Institution of Civil Engineers on 8 September. Around 100 people attended, and the speeches, questions and list of attendees are available on-line at **www.britishwaterways.co.uk/annual_meeting**

NEW WATERWAYS OMBUDSMAN

Hilary Bainbridge was appointed as Waterways Ombudsman in July this year. She follows in the steps of Stephen Edell, who retired after eight years in the role. Hilary has many years experience in Ombudsman work, including working for eight years as a Director of Investigations for the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman before she became Deputy Local Government Ombudsman for the North of England. To contact Hilary Bainbridge please write to:

The Waterways Ombudsman
PO Box 35
YORK
YO66 6WW
T 01347 879075
E enquiries@waterways-ombudsman.org



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BW NEWS

Introducing…

Since the last edition of *Waterfront* BW has seen several new appointments, including:

Tony Hales: Tony succeeds George Greener as BW chairman. Appointed by Defra, Tony joined BW in July this year. He is also chairman of Workspace Group plc and non-executive chairman of NAAFI Ltd. He was previously chief executive of Allied Domecq and a non-executive director of HSBC Bank plc and Welsh Water plc. Tony regularly walks along the Stratford-upon-Avon and Grand Union canals, and has sampled the delights of boating on the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal. His appointment is for three years.

Philip Ridal: Philip joins BW as finance director replacing Mark Smith. Philip, formerly group finance director of Manchester Airports Group plc, is a chartered accountant, a member of the Association of Corporate Treasurers and also has a degree in civil engineering.

There have also been some important internal appointments:

Jim Stirling: Many of you may know Jim as director, BW Scotland, and now Jim has been appointed as technical director designate, taking over from Stewart Sim. His appointment, with his existing knowledge of BW and wider experience, will ensure a smooth handover. The process to find a new director in Scotland is now well underway.

Jonathan Griffiths: Jonathan has replaced Adrian Sains as general manager North West Waterways. Some of you may recognise Jonathan as he was recently acting general manager, Wales & Border Counties Waterways. Jonathan has worked for BW since 1990, most recently as finance controller for the Northern Waterways.

And goodbye to:

Stewart Sim OBE: Stewart has worked for BW for over 30 years, most recently as technical director, but previously holding a variety of positions including area engineer, Wigan, and regional manager, Midlands. I'm sure that the readers of *Waterfront* will join BW in thanking Stewart for the huge contribution he has made to the waterways and wishing him all the best for his retirement. There will be a number of opportunities, around the network, to see Stewart before he goes. These are currently being arranged. Please contact Karen Jell for more information
T 01923 201257 or
E karen.jell@britishwaterways.co.uk.

NEW WATERSIDE PUBS

The Steamboat Inn at Trent Lock on the Erewash Canal is the second pub to undergo refurbishment following BW's establishment of 'the Waterways Pub Partnership' with Scottish & Newcastle.

The Steamboat Inn, which had laid dormant for over a year prior to its acquisition by the Partnership in July, opened its doors to boaters and towpath visitors this August.

Following a £120k refurbishment of The Steamboat Inn, the new lessees John and Rose Deakin are focusing on serving fresh homemade food and good beers.

The first partnership pub, the Foxton Locks Inn on the Grand Union Canal has exceeded all expectations since it's opening in May this year.

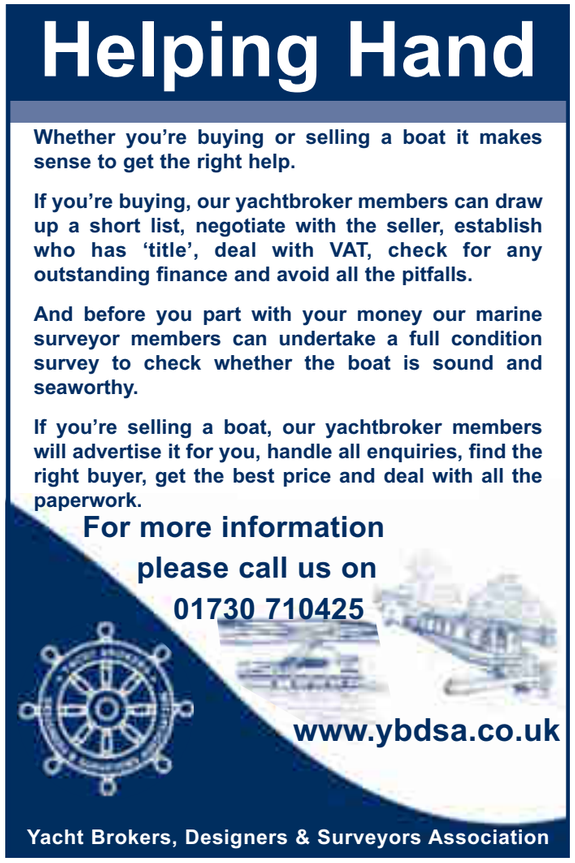
OPENNESS & ACCOUNTABILITY REFORMS COMPLETE

BW has now put in place the package of measures designed to improve openness and accountability with its stakeholders.

The inaugural British Waterways Advisory Forum (BWAF) meeting was held in May and was attended by BW's chairman, chief executive, some board members and over 30 national user group representatives.

Howard Pridding (BMF's executive director) was elected as chairman, with Dave Fletcher (RYA), elected as vice-chairman. The Forum was created to allow a proper opportunity for informed debate about issues of a strategic and policy nature concerning BW's stewardship of the canal and river network. Along with bringing issues of concern raised from within their own organisations to the attention of BW's senior management and board members, user group representatives are able to provide valuable input into issues that BW brings to the Forum for consideration. The initial meeting to set the future agenda was held on the 9 September and the first full meeting of BWAF was held on the 11 October. Topics discussed included BW's restoration strategy, BW's consultation process and waterway standards.

On top of this, the Waterways Ombudsman Committee is now in place to oversee the operation of the re-constituted and updated Ombudsman Scheme to ensure that it is working independently and effectively. BW's complaints procedure has also been reformed resulting in a more streamlined and responsive system. To find out more visit **www.britishwaterways.co.uk/accountability**.



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ALL CREATURES GREAT & SMALL

Swans, ducks, water voles, herons, dragonflies… a sight we all take for granted on the waterways… but did you know that BW's ecologists put a lot of hard work into ensuring our waterways continue to be great habitats for many species?

Waterfront's Becky Mutlow takes a look at wildlife by the water, and learns how the British Waterways Wildlife Survey can help look after it.

HELPING HANDS

Even Mother Nature needs a helping hand now and again, and the British Waterways Wildlife Survey is one way to help out. BW ecologists use the survey as a tool to ensure the waterways are at the optimum level to support as many species as possible and practicable. Everyone who uses the waterways can make a valuable contribution towards protecting waterway wildlife by recording and noting the location of the insects, birds and animals you see whilst you're out and about. This gives BW a clearer picture of what species live where on the system. All the data is kept on a species database that's also available to the National Biodiversity Network, The Wildlife Trusts and other organisations with waterway environment responsibilities.

WHERE'S RATTY?

The wildlife survey can also help BW protect rarer species like water voles (best known as Ratty from Wind in the Willows). More unusual sightings that have been recorded as a result of the survey include a playful seal in London Docklands, an otter near the centre of Leeds in the River Aire and even a Chinese Mitten Crab on the Grand Union Canal in Southall.

HOPPING INTO ACTION

BW's ecologists have been implementing a whole range of actions to help conserve waterway species. From checking stoppage sites to ensure local wildlife is protected, to providing support on projects such as the Findern Ballast Hole Pond restoration, near the Trent & Mersey Canal. Here are some more ways they've been getting involved:

Cray-zee for you

On the Huddersfield Narrow Canal the local team have been installing small pipes so crayfish can create their own homes in them - previous steel walls had prevented them from doing so before.

A raft of ideas

On the River Lee at Tottenham and Enfield, BW and Environment Agency ecologists have been installing rafts planted with reeds and other native plants. These rafts provide a habitat for fish and dragonflies, food for ducks and swans and even nesting places for coots and moorhens.

Winged wonders

All across the waterways bat bricks have been installed in various bridges to provide extra bat homes. Bats and their roosts are protected by law, and BW go to great lengths to ensure they remain protected, including BW ecologists abseiling the 200-year-old Lune Aqueduct on the Lancaster Canal to carry out a bat survey!

FIND OUT WHAT'S BUZZING AROUND YOUR AREA

The wildlife survey campaign runs throughout the summer months. The results from this summer's wildlife survey will be available on-line at Waterscape.com this autumn. But Waterscape invites you to keep an eye out all year round. There are wildlife pages dedicated to each season explaining what you can expect to see, with fact-files about the species you are likely to spot out on the waterways. You can input your findings on-line or print off the survey and take it with you when you next go out on the waterways. Tick what you see, where you saw it and the date – it's that simple.

TV presenter, Kate Humble, launched the British Waterways Wildlife Survey 2005

You might be lucky enough to spot a water vole (pictured top left) or a kingfisher (pictured left) whilst you are out on the waterways

waterscape.com

For more information visit
www.waterscape.com/features/wildlife/
or contact the BW Customer Service Centre on 01923 201120.

FIVE things you can do to help protect inland waterway wildlife

1. Try not to pollute the waterways with chemicals and kitchen waste from your sink or with fuel or oil from your engine. Regularly check your bilges and get them pumped out at a marina if they are oily. Check your drip tray and remove oil accumulations before they spill over into the bilges – special oil absorbent materials can be bought from most chandlers. Take care when fuelling to avoid spillage.
2. Make an effort not to disturb nesting birds. If a bird feels under threat they will abandon their nest and eggs.
3. As much as you can, take your rubbish home with you. Anglers, ensure you have picked up all your fishing lines and hooks.
4. Do not introduce non-native species to the waterways; this can upset the ecological balance of the canal. Sometimes terrapins are found on the waterways, normally having been dumped as unwanted pets. They can live for 30 years and affect other wildlife.
5. Slow down! Going too fast will erode the banks, which are key habitats for wildlife.

THEN & NOW FRADLEY JUNCTION

Fradley Junction is a picturesque canalside settlement solely developed as a result of canal construction. It's located in rural Staffordshire, where the Trent & Mersey and Coventry canals meet, just a mile and a half from Fradley village.

AN EXPENSIVE LEADER

The Trent & Mersey Canal, originally the Grand Trunk Canal, was the brainchild of engineer James Brindley who wanted a canal to join the rivers Trent and Mersey.

Work began in July 1766, but progress was slow due to the lengthy build of the Harecastle Tunnel, near Kidsgrove. At 2,880 yards it took nearly 11 years to complete. Unfortunately Brindley died in 1777, five years before the 93-mile canal was completed at a cost of nearly £300,000. In today's money that's a staggering £33 million!

THE POOR COUSIN

The Coventry Canal was built primarily to transport coal from pits at Bedworth, Coventry and Nuneaton to the rest of the Midlands. Once again Brindley was appointed engineer, this time he wanted to link four major rivers; the Mersey; Trent; Severn; and Thames.

The 38-mile canal runs from Fradley, near Lichfield, to Coventry's city centre. The project was nearly a non-starter, but eventually works began in 1768 and the first stretch opened from Longford to Bedworth, then through to Atherstone in 1771. Then in 1777 another junction was created with the Oxford Canal at Hawkesbury, and this goes as far as Banbury.

It wasn't easy going and disaster quickly struck; works came to a halt because the Coventry Canal Company ran out of money. But the Trent & Mersey and the Birmingham & Fazeley canal companies saved the day. They bailed out the Coventry Canal in 1782 when they agreed to finance the completion of the northern section between Fazeley and Fradley. So by 1790 the whole of the Coventry Canal was complete and Fradley Junction was born.

ALL TOGETHER NOW

Both canal companies built houses and cottages for their workers at Fradley Junction. 'Wharf House' also known as 'Junction House', is the former Georgian residence of the Coventry Canal's engineer and 'Watersmeet' is the former residence and office of the Trent & Mersey Canal's district engineer.

Two warehouses dating from the 1790s, complete with hoists, were erected at Junction Row alongside the Swan public house. Today they've become a boatyard with facilities for boaters and timeshare boats, and a canalia and provisions store.

Further down the towpath is the original wharf built by the Trent & Mersey Canal Company, which included: stables; carpentry workshop; blacksmith's forge; timber store; and maintenance yard.

The carpentry shop made objects such as lock gates and balance beams. And believe it or not the blacksmith's forge didn't make horseshoes, they made paddle gear and handrails instead!

These buildings now house BW's canal-side café with indoor and outside seating areas, a shop and information centre. Open seven days a week, it's a handy drop-in point, but visitors can also get information 24 hours-a-day through a touch-screen with details about boating, facilities, local attractions, waterway leisure activities and much more.

KEEP IT UNDER YOUR HAT… OR PUB?

To the west of Fradley Junction, the Trent & Mersey Canal Company had a secret. They wished to avoid water loss to the Coventry Canal and hatched a cunning plan in the 1780s. As a result, surplus water was led off the canal at an overflow weir that passed along a 'secret' channel. It went underneath the public house and behind the neighbouring cottages, before returning to the Trent & Mersey Canal to the east of the junction.

The excess water from this bypass channel was stored in a new reservoir – Fradley Pool. The reservoir now forms the main feature of Fradley Pool Nature Reserve, recently classified as a Site of Biological Importance. There's an award-winning nature trail, with a bird hide, pond dipping platforms and tree sculptures.

UP THE JUNCTION

Today Fradley Junction is still a bustling area for boaters and towpath users alike. To help visitors make the most of their stay there is a Fradley Pool Nature Reserve leaflet available, and a Wild Over Waterways education pack on both canals, along with the Fradley Junction trail sheet. These can be downloaded from **www.wow4water.net** Guided walks are also organised all year round, just call BW's Central Shires Waterways office at Fazeley on 01827 252000 for more information or check on Waterscape.com.

Images from left to right:
Fradley Junction Lock, 1961; Junction Row and The Swan Inn, 1961; Today a popular destination for visitors; and The old jib crane by J S Lee & Co, rescued by the Trent & Mersey Canal Society from Horninglow Basin, Burton-on-Trent in 1977, re-erected next to the information centre.

All black and white pictures are courtesy of The Waterways Trust, BW Archive and Arther Watts Collection.

JUST ASK...

Did you know that BW has a property and development estate worth £470 million? From lock cottages, to office blocks and maintenance yards – there's a huge range of sites and buildings right across the waterway network. *Waterfront's* Gill Owen tackled BW's commercial director, James Froomberg, about why BW has this property and land, what it's used for, and most importantly how BW uses it to improve the waterway network.

James Froomberg,
BW Commercial Director

You're the BW commercial director; tell us what the purpose of your role is?
Well to put it quite bluntly in the last year BW spent £114 million operating and maintaining the waterways alone. We received £73.4 million in government grants from the Westminster government and Scottish Executive. That means there's a shortfall of around £40 million, and, in brief, my job, along with many others, is to ensure that this money is generated commercially. This includes making sure that our own business ventures are as profitable as they can be, and one of the largest areas from which we can self-generate income is property.

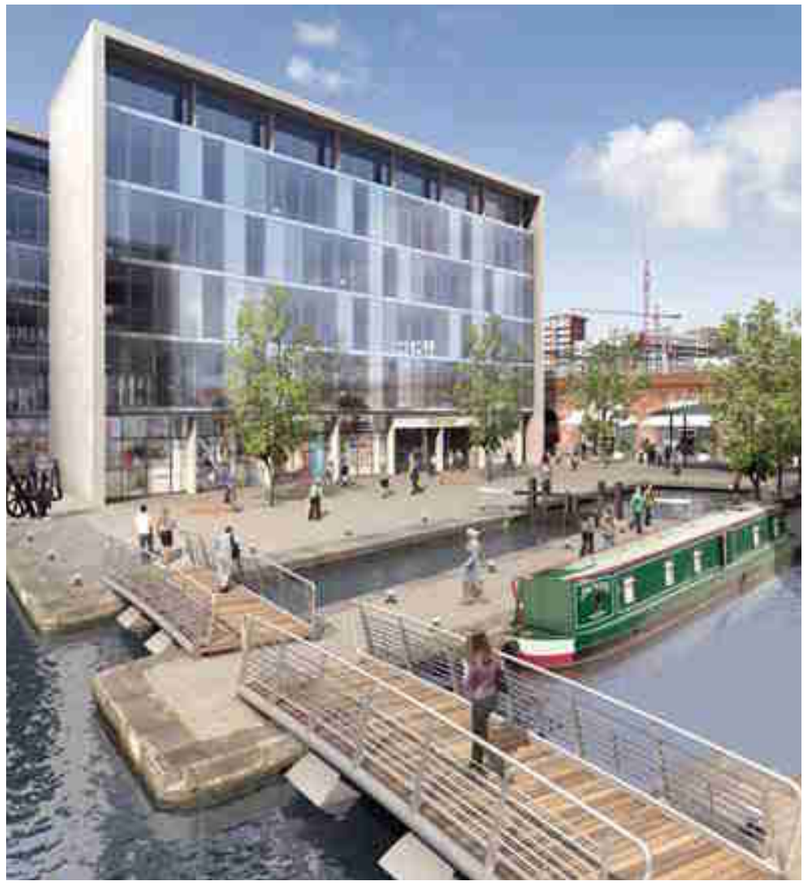
What about income from craft licences? Doesn't that make up the shortfall?
That income is certainly very important, and in the past financial year income from craft licences increased to £10.5 million, however as you can see that's still not enough for us to do what we want. Because we are a public corporation there are strict rules and regulations about how we can generate more funds. We can't raise new capital as other businesses can – we're not allowed to borrow money or raise new equity in the stock market for example. All we have to invest is what we already have – which in most cases is property. My team and I are constantly evaluating the returns on our investments and balancing that against the risks involved. Every penny that we earn is reinvested into the waterways.

What property does BW actually own then?
As part of the nationalisation process in 1962, we not only inherited waterspace, but also some of the associated land and buildings, such as freight depots, yards and pieces of land beside the canals, as well as lock cottages and waterway company buildings. We own more than 1,800 property assets, comprising investment properties (from which we get rental income and capital growth) and operational properties such as waterway offices and yards.

So it seems that BW's property and development estate is very important to the maintenance of the waterways?
Exactly. Property is incredibly important, and has a direct impact on what we can do out there on the waterways. This year we had £3 million extra to spend on dredging due to an exceptionally good year in property. So yes, we are lucky to have inherited this property, and are equally lucky to have a dedicated team making our property work for the waterways.

£470 million is a huge amount of money – why doesn't BW just sell this land and property and invest that money into the waterways?
We couldn't just sell it all – it would be very short sighted, we'd have nothing to generate future income from and wouldn't have the opportunities we have now to ensure that waterside developments add benefit to the waterways as well as taking into consideration environment and heritage factors.

From reading the Annual Report & Accounts 2004/05, and articles in the property press, BW seems to be spending a lot of time and money regenerating sites and developing partnerships, such as the Pubs Partnership – can you tell me more about that side of the property business?
Yes – that's our other hat. We think we're a role model for Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) and the government thinks the same. We're immensely proud of that. Regenerating urban and rural waterside locations can only be good for the waterways – a great example is Sowerby Bridge Warehouses. These 18th century listed warehouses have been entirely refurbished as part of the regeneration of the Sowerby Bridge canal basin area. We worked with the Heritage Lottery Fund and Yorkshire Forward on this project, and now the warehouses have been converted to offices, workshops and even a restaurant. Part of the scheme saw an historic wet dock regenerated and the local hire boat company, Shire Cruisers, uses it, which means there are always boats around too. As for partnerships, the Pubs Partnership was a way we could get a greater return on some of our property and enhance the visitor experience to the waterways. BW joined forces with Scottish & Newcastle Pub Enterprises to create a 50/50 joint venture. The first pub at Foxton opened in spring this year. By 2008/09 it's expected that the partnership will have over 50 pubs earning £3 million rent each year.



PROPERTY PROPERTY PROPERTY PROPERTY PROPERTY PROPERTY PROPERTY PROPERTY

An artist's impression of the proposed regeneration of Leeds Basin, and the recently developed Edinburgh Quay area both during the day and as the venue for the Edinburgh Festival opening party

You are obviously very proud of the BW property business, what do you see happening in the future?
I am very proud of what BW is doing – and make no apology for the commercialism of what we do – acting in this way means BW can become largely self-sufficient and ultimately earn more to re-invest in the waterways. I'd ask anyone who is unsure about our ambitions (in terms of property) to take a look at Edinburgh Quay. I'm particularly proud of this, hardly anyone knew there was a canal in Edinburgh, now there are boats on the water and a fantastic mixed-use development, including bars and restaurants, which means that more of the public can get access to the waterways and see what all the fuss is about. There are plenty of exciting schemes in the pipeline; Leeds Canal Basin, Gloucester Quays and Wood Wharf are just a selection. There are plenty of checks and balances in place as well, in fact a whole raft of people have to approve what BW does, and ultimately (in the bigger developments) the Treasury can have the final word.

And to sum up?
Property is the best way we can generate income for the waterways, it's also how we can make the waterside a more attractive place for all users – especially boaters.

If you want to find out more there's a section about property in BW's document - Our Plan for the Future 2005 –2009, and for detailed figures the BW Annual Report & Accounts 2004/05. Both are available at www.britishwaterways.co.uk/downloads, or by contacting the BW Customer Service Centre on 01923 201120.

Since their creation over 200 years ago, canals have been kept alive by the dedicated people who have worked on them. And these canalmen and women have always relied on boats, not desks and offices, to carry out their work. A workboat enabled them to move from place to place, store their essential tools, and in many cases live aboard.

Workboats have come a long way since then. The current boats owned by BW are designed to cope with a whole range of tasks from carrying tools to repair the waterways during stoppages, to catching felled trees, as well as dredging the canals and weed removal.

THE BW FLEET

21st CENTURY FLEET

BW is bringing its workboats into the 21st century with a brand new fleet. The new, specially designed narrow beam tugs and barges are modular so BW teams can pick and choose different sections of the fleet for specific uses. A broad beam range is also being designed for 2006.

WHY UPGRADE?

The Maritime & Coastguard Agency is introducing higher standards for inland waterways working craft in 2008, so BW is working ahead of the game to bring their fleet up to scratch well before the legislation comes into force. Importantly, welfare facilities for waterway staff form a big part of these higher standards.

WARM AND COSY

The new boats will mean somewhere for BW people on the bank to be warm and safe especially when working long hours outside over the winter months. The previous boats only had the bare necessities. Now they come fitted with hot water, flushable toilets, heating, lighting and a sink. These facilities are housed in what's called an 'accommodation pod'.

The pod can be removed from the boat, so if more space is needed onboard for works materials, all they have to do is crane the pod off the boat and put it down on the bank next to their workplace.

MOBILE WORKING

There's also a mobile workshop pod, and like the accommodation pods, these can be removed too, so they can be kept onboard or deposited at a works site. The workshop pod includes a workbench with a vice, tool and welding unit, as well as storage.

HOP TO IT!

To make things more cost effective, the hoppers (which are the base units), are not motorised. If the waterway unit has a tug it can move the hoppers to different locations, and without having to go to a winding hole, as the hopper will work in either direction.

TRIAL PERIOD

Two tugs, hoppers and pods have been on trial in the Midlands for the last 18 months so that BW staff could test out the new fleet. Already many benefits have been noted, especially the dramatic improvements in working conditions. In August an open-day was held for waterway operatives from around the network so that they could see the new workboats they'll be working with.

So far, 31 hoppers, 36 accommodation pods, six workshop pods and 25 tugs have been ordered. So there's every chance you'll see one of the new workboats on a waterway near you soon.

OUT WITH THE OLD AND IN WITH THE NEW

Not all of the old workboats can be saved, some are not able to be upgraded and have no heritage or resale value. These will be cut up and disposed of, eventually being recycled. Inevitably this will leave a large number of unused engines, parts, patterns and spares. Some of these will have heritage or special interest value and will be kept, but any other remaining parts will be gathered together into lots and auctioned.

However, some boats in the current fleet are specialised and/or relatively new. Many already meet current maintenance, health, welfare and safety requirements or could be upgraded, they'll be kept.

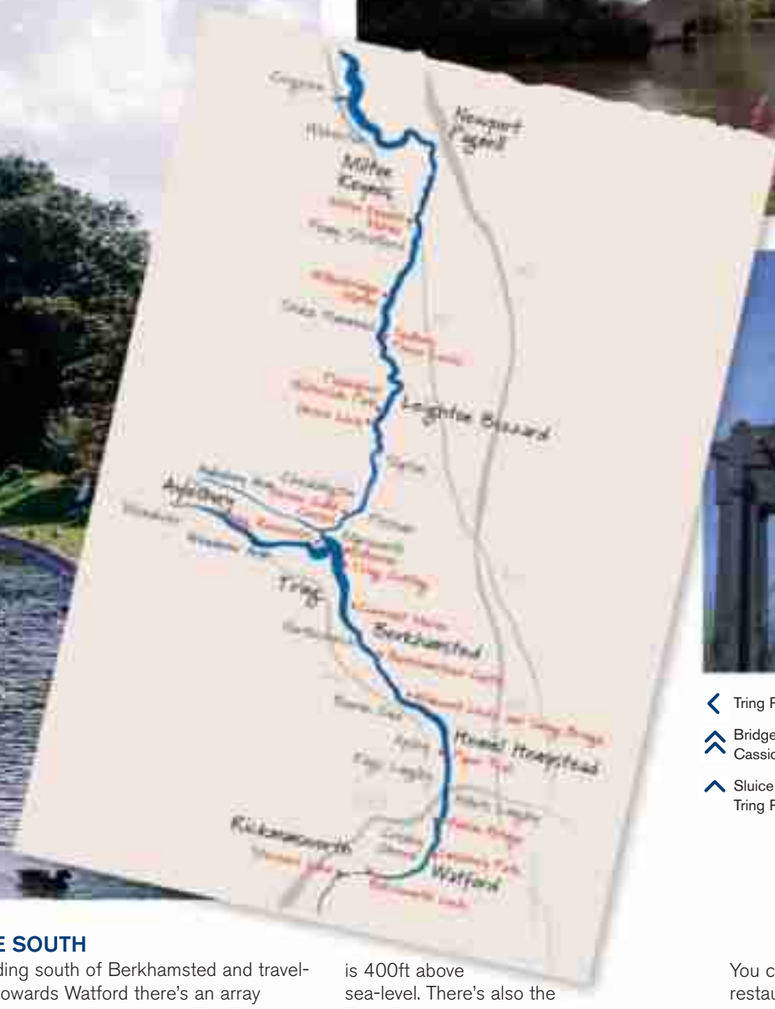
INTERESTED IN BUYING A BW WORKBOAT?

A catalogue of boats being auctioned will be published at the end of 2005. To receive a copy, please write to or email to Veronica Belfitt veronica.belfitt@britishwaterways.co.uk or post to Fearns Wharf, Neptune Street, Leeds LS9 8PB. Please include your name, address, phone number and a brief description of the type of craft you are interested in.

THIS IS MY PATCH...

The Grand Union Canal is the trunk of Britain's canal system, linking London to Birmingham via the picturesque Chilterns. The 137-mile main line has various branches along the way that reach out to the towns and cities of central England.

Once the busiest canal in the country, today the charm of the Grand Union lies in its diversity. *Waterfront's* Gill Owen caught up with waterway supervisor, Lee King to check out his patch.



Tring Reservoirs

Bridge 164 at The Grove near Cassiobury Park, Watford

Sluice paddle gearing at Tring Reservoirs

ALL IN A NAME

Lee works for BW's South East Waterways, and is used to jokes linked to his 'watery' name. Anyone that meets Lee will quickly realise he is dedicated to the job - maintaining the canal is his top priority. Along with three team leaders and 22 waterway operatives, Lee manages nearly 50 miles of the Grand Union Canal mainline from Stoker's Lock in Rickmansworth to the Great Ouse Aqueduct at Cosgrove, as well as the Aylesbury and Wendover arms of the canal. Lee explains, "I describe the canal as a green and pleasant artery running through the land."

LEARNING CURVE

Lee has 19 years' service with BW and says, "working with BW has given me loads of opportunities. The latest of which is my new, extended patch and team, which I've been in charge of for about two months."

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

This stretch has everything: a bustling city; busy market towns; and sleepy villages in rolling countryside. "There's definitely something for everyone along the stretch. I couldn't possibly do it all justice," explains Lee, "so I've just picked four places to concentrate on today."

THE CROWN OF ENGLAND

We start our whistle-stop tour at Berkhamsted – an historic town complete with castle ruins. In 1066 the Saxon leaders, anxious to save England from further destruction, rode out from London to talk with the Norman invaders and offer William the Crown of England. The meeting took place at Berkhamsted Castle; on accepting the submission of the Saxons, William became William the Conqueror. "It's a lovely place to stop, with plenty of cafes and restaurants," says Lee. "There's an information point at Berkhamsted Locks that explains the role of the canal in the development of the town. If you want to travel into the centre of London, but not by boat, the train only takes 35 minutes to Euston from here, and the station is right next to the canal – handy for a day trip."

DUE SOUTH

Heading south of Berkhamsted and travelling towards Watford there's an array of waterside pubs, including The Three Horseshoes at Winkwell. Lee explains, "It's a lovely spot to spend a quiet evening. If you want somewhere livelier then why not stop at Cassiobury Park in Watford. The park is lovely – especially for children. There's plenty of open space to run around, paddling pools, a play area, and in the summer a café and miniature railway. A stop here is also an excuse for a night out, Watford has plenty of bars, nightclubs and a comedy club."

TRING TRIANGLE

Our next stop takes us north again, back past Berkhamsted and onto an area known as the Tring Triangle. Lee explains, "The area around Tring and Marsworth is a real hub of interest for canal enthusiasts. The Aylesbury and Wendover arms leave the mainline from this area, and there's the Marsworth Lock Flight, the summit of which is 400ft above sea-level. There's also the Tring Reservoirs that were built to supplement the canal. Water from these reservoirs is eventually pumped further up the system towards Leicester and Birmingham." The reservoirs are a real hive of activity for wildlife and there are several circular walks, with bird-hides to spot from. Lee says, "check out the interpretation boards in the car-park that explain all about the reservoirs. The paths are very good, especially for wheelchairs and pushchairs and there's a lovely tearoom and several pubs nearby, so you can make a day of it."

BRIGHT LIGHTS, BIG CITY

The last spot that Lee picks on his patch even surprises him: "I never thought I'd say it - I really like Milton Keynes! It's brilliant, especially for boaters, you can moor-up and explore the city. Take a walk or cycle ride to the theatre district, or head off to the Snow Dome and try skiing or even snowboarding. You can then relax at the bars and restaurants or go bowling for the evening." Another reason that Lee has a soft spot for Milton Keynes is the working relationships with other groups that have formed here: "I have to say a big thank-you to the Milton Keynes branch of the IWA, we really appreciate their support."

FORGET-ME-NOT

Lee explains, "There are so many places that we haven't mentioned – there are museums to visit, and plenty of interesting towns to wander around, and lots of pubs to try. I hope that people come and discover the patch for themselves – and if you bump into me, be sure to say hello."

You can use Waterscape.com to find out more information about the area and to download a Boaters' Guide.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A VISITOR MOORING

Over £250,000 has recently been ploughed into Nantwich, on the Shropshire Union Canal, seeing over a mile of towpath upgraded, a newly landscaped embankment built, community art pieces (including a giant horse carved out of old balance beams!) installed, and better access for boaters to the historic town centre, including ramps for wheelchair users and pushchairs.

On a hot August morning *Waterfront* chatted to some of the boaters who had made a stop at the Nantwich visitor moorings.

Tony and Graham, with Picketty

THIRD TIME LUCKY

Tony and Graham began boating 22 years ago on a cruiser and have had three narrowboats since. "It was the best way to start out. Rather than diving straight in at the deep end and buying a 70-ft narrowboat, we gradually increased the size of the boat once we were used to it," says Tony. They also lived on a boat for six years. "People were surprised that we had all mod-cons on board, but these days you can virtually get anything on a boat," explains Graham.

Pete Holland, with Megan

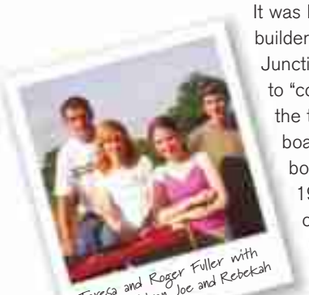
AT LAST!

Pete and Fran were on their way to Worcester when we stopped to quiz them about boating. "We first went boating 23 years ago when we took our family out for the weekend. We loved it, and from time to time we went out on hire boats, but not very often, so we could save up for our own boat." Pete tells us, "it took us 20 years, but *At Last* we've finally got there!"

FULL-ER LOVE

It was love at first sight when Roger, a boat builder from Stone, met Teresa at Fradley Junction back in 1980, and asked Teresa to "come and look at his brasses…" At the time Teresa was working on a hotel boat, and Roger was selling coal off his boat during a break from teaching. In 1993 they built 70-ft *Azalea*, based on a Joshua, Fellows, Morton & Clayton design.

It took a year to complete and now the family are enjoying holidays when they can, including this four counties ring trip.



Teresa and Roger Fuller with their children Joe and Rebekah

KEEPING UP APPEARANCES

We bumped into John as he was giving his boat a quick touch-up. John and Anne first started boating in 1972 when they took a family holiday and loved it. The couple then became part of a boat share, and enjoyed it so much they wanted their own. In 1995 they took the big step and ordered a shell which John fitted out and called *Noble*.

John and Ann Hall

George and Sheila Astbury with friends Hazel and Dennis Burchett

ELLESMERE RALLY

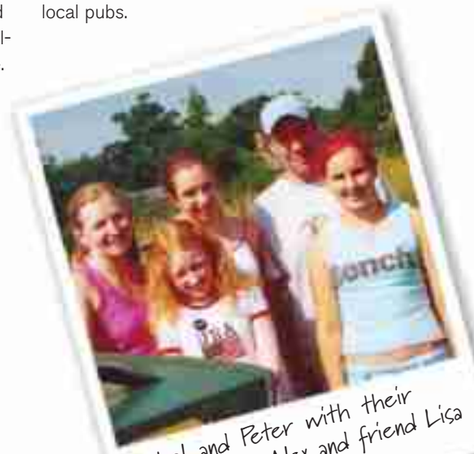
It was 20 years ago that George and Shelia purchased *Ellesmere* their 50-ft narrowboat. Before that they took seven canal boat holidays. They got the bug and took the bold move to buy. But it wasn't all plain sailing. George loathed his first time on a boat, explaining: "the weather was against us, there were too many locks, and I thought never again." But a second trip changed his mind forever. George and Sheila are on an epic journey from their home mooring at Henley-on-Thames to Preston Brook, with firm cruising buddies Hazel and Dennis (see right).

COAST TO CANAL

Hazel and Dennis didn't plan to fall in love with the waterways. They were all set to move to the coast when Dennis took a chance walk along the canal. The next day he was en-route to purchasing his first narrowboat. Fifteen years later and he still owns *Damacena*, his 59-ft boat. They are on their way to the National Waterways Festival at Preston Brook, and are relaxing at Nantwich, safe in the knowledge that they are well ahead of schedule. In fact Dennis and Hazel have only missed two IWA national festivals in the past 15 years.

DADDY'S GIRL

Rachel's father has owned *Lothlorien* for around 13 years, and on the infrequent occasions that her dad isn't out cruising, Rachel and family take up the opportunity. The family started off from Whixall Marina, and will cruise to Audlem Locks. They stopped at Nantwich yesterday, and strolled around the floral market town's shopping streets, before relaxing in one of the local pubs.



Rachel and Peter with their children Jess, Alex and friend Lisa

PROMOTING AND PROTECTING BOATING

Whether you are new to boating or an experienced hand, there's always something more to learn about cruising the inland waterways. And yes, you can teach old dogs new tricks!

Training courses are just one area in which the Royal Yachting Association (RYA) gets involved in boating on the canals and rivers. So if you thought this organisation is just about coastal sailing – think again.

The RYA is a national association and negotiating body for all forms of boating, including sailing and motor boating, sports boats, personal watercraft, powerboat racing and even windsurfing. *Waterfront's* Hannah Kitchener spoke to the RYA marketing manager, John Bagnall and cruising manager, Stuart Carruthers to find out more.

FROM THE YRA TO RYA – SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

The Royal Yachting Association (RYA) was formed from the Yacht Racing Association (YRA), which was established in 1875 by a group of 35 individuals in London. Its primary purpose was to standardise the rules governing the measurement of racing yachts, so that boats of different classes could compete against each other.

It was only in 1921 when the YRA took over the Sailing Boat Association and the Boat Racing Association that dinghies and other small craft were allowed to join. In 1947 the General Purposes Committee (now Legal and Government Affairs Division of the RYA) was set up to represent all branches of the sport - both power and sail cruising. Then in 1953 the YRA formally became the Royal Yachting Association we know today.

RYA TODAY

The RYA is a membership organisation with no shareholders. Any surplus from subscriptions, grants or trading activities is retained against future expenditure to promote and protect boating.

John explains, "The mission is to promote safe and successful UK sailing and motor-boating. To achieve this the RYA focuses on five main aims, to: increase participation in boating; raise safety standards; represent and protect boaters' interests; raise performance standards; and establish and administer training programmes."

He adds, "and it is recognised by all government offices as being the negotiating body for the water activities it represents."

INLAND WATERWAYS MATTER

Stuart explains the RYA's long held commitment to inland waterways, "we have represented the interests of inland boaters from the very first meeting of the General Purposes Committee in 1947. More recently, the RYA has been actively encouraging the creation of strategic alliances with inland navigation authorities to identify, develop and work together on issues. These alliances help to promote and defend the rights of navigation and its freedom from unnecessary legislation."

TRAINING IS KEY

The RYA actively encourages newcomers to boating. Since 1967 they have been heavily involved in navigation training, promoting good practice and safety afloat. In the beginning 72 schools applied for RYA recognition, the armed forces adopted the scheme two years later and the Yachtmaster Qualifications Panel was set up in 1971. Now there are over 400,000 affiliated clubs.

The RYA Inland Waters Helmsman's Course (IWHC) is a one-day course for boaters wanting to cruise the inland waterways. "It is awarded after a training course and is designed to make the experience more fun and enjoyable by teaching the basic skills needed to navigate safely and with confidence," explains Stuart. "It covers essential rules and regulations, useful hints and tips on boat handling, engine and machinery checks, lights and sound signals, recommended equipment, safety at locks and water safety."

The course gives confidence to the novice and provides some useful reminders and tips for even the most experienced boater. And if you are planning to cruise European waterways this course is also the first step to gain the essential International Certification of Competence (ICC).

The RYA Inland Waterways Handbook (RRP £7.90) accompanies the course and can be ordered by telephone on 0845 345 0372 or on-line from the RYA website.

MEMBERSHIP

The RYA represents the interests of every-one who goes boating for pleasure and membership is open to all boat users.

There are four types of membership including: full individual adult membership from £37 and reduced membership from £12 for under 21s. Family membership is from £52 for two adults and any number of children under 21 and there is also Life Membership that varies depending on age.

WHY JOIN?

Members have the opportunity to seek advice on all boating related topics from cruising, training and racing, to legal and technical matters. Members also enjoy a variety of benefits and special offers, for example, money off books, CDs, ICC renewal, insurance schemes, breakdown cover and a quarterly magazine to name a few.

The organisation also lobbies Government, the EU and pressure groups on their mem-bers' behalf to limit proposed restrictions on boating. This assistance is provided to all recreational boat owners, under power or sail, both on inland and tidal waters in the UK.

For further information
RYA House, Ensign Way, Hamble, Southampton SO31 4YA

T 023 8060 4100
E info@rya.org.uk
www.rya.org.uk

Photographs courtesy of Christine Spreiter and the RYA

Youth training vessel approaching Clachnaharry on the Caledonian Canal

Stuart Carruthers, RYA cruising manager, getting to grips with the Inland Waterways Helmsman's Course (right). A training narrowboat negotiating locks on the River Nene (far right).

WORKING FOR THE WATERWAYS

Name: Peter Kennedy

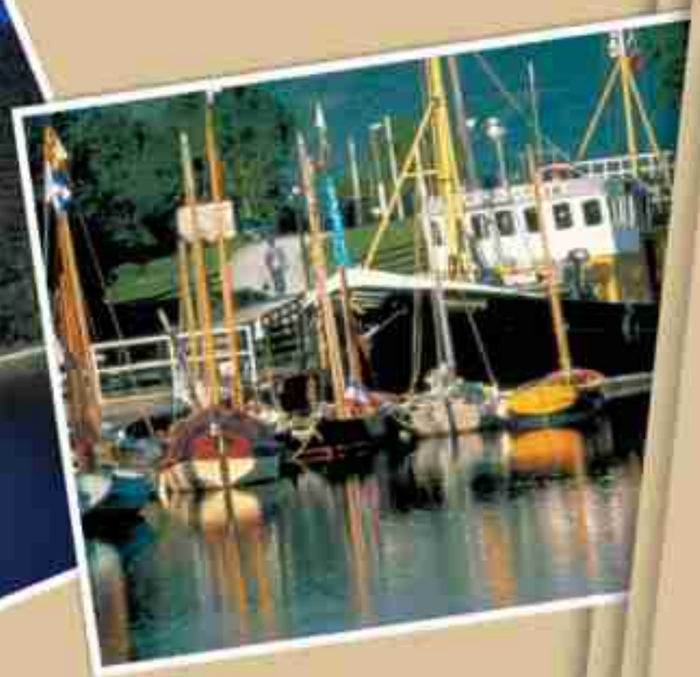
Position: Head Lock Keeper, Corpach

Time at BW: 34 years

Peter Kennedy started working for BW back in 1971. His first job was a banksman on the Crinan Canal and soon after he became the lock keeper at Crinan Sea Lock. A few jobs later he was transferred to Fort Augustus on the Caledonian Canal. Peter is now the head lock keeper at Corpach.

"Before working for BW I didn't know anything about canals," says Peter. "I thought 'this will do me for now' and after just two weeks I knew it was for me. It's my life now, not a job. I love being in the great outdoors and my work has given me great satisfaction. I enjoy meeting people and helping them out."

Peter is also responsible for training new staff: "it's really satisfying helping the future generation of canalmen, and I can pass on my 34 years of experience."



Name: Louise Bone

Position: Customer Operations Manager

Time at BW: 8 years

In Yorkshire, Louise Bone is getting things in to shape. Louise started working for BW in 1997 as an administrator in the technical department.

"In my eight years with BW I have had a number of jobs. Previously I was doing a lot of processing, but I'm much happier now as I'm in a job that's really in the thick of things."

Louise is the customer operations manager for Yorkshire Waterways, based in Castleford. She is responsible for ensuring BW's customers are happy. "I love my job, every day I come to work I'm dealing with something different," describes Louise, "and I know that by sorting out a problem I'll have made a real difference to someone, and that's great."

Name: Chris Pavel

Position: Waterway Team Leader

Time at BW: 24 years

Chris Pavel was born in Kineton near the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal. He then moved with his family to the Czech Republic during his childhood, before returning to the Kineton area, and the canal, as a bricklayer.

Now Chris is a waterway team leader on the Grand Union Canal between Cape Locks and Napton, and has 24 years' service under his belt.

With a massive 17 miles of canal to manage, Chris and his team of four have a lot to do. Chris is very proud of his stretch, his team, and what they achieve, saying: "You get great satisfaction from seeing a job finished and we keep a photo diary of all the work that we've done."

Name: Gill Walsh

Position: Craft Licensing Supervisor

Time at BW: 18 years

Anything to do with boat licensing past and present, Gill Walsh is the person to ask: "I've been in the job for 18 years and I still love it."

As craft licensing team supervisor, Gill manages a team of five people who are responsible for processing the 27,000 boat licences and 6,000 mooring licences each year.

Back in the 1950s Gill's mum used to work for the Docks and Inland Waterways, before BW was formed. "This was when I was very, very young and I used to think my mum worked in a dock," says Gill. "It wasn't until I came for an interview at Willow Grange that I realised where my mum actually worked." One of Gill's daughters also worked for BW in the personnel department, so maybe it's in the blood!

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LETTERS

Thank you for your kind comments regarding your experience on Lowland Canals and the assistance you received from our customer service team moving through the locks where we provide assisted passage to all craft. We are all delighted to hear that you enjoyed your holiday and hope that you may return and spend more time as the leisure opportunities expand.
However we must also accept responsibility for not providing you with 100% customer satisfaction. From 1 April this year we have offered overnight mooring facilities in the Falkirk Wheel Basin for a fee of £10.
You should have been offered this facility, and we apologise for spoiling the end of your holiday.

Ronnie Simpson,
leisure development manager,
BW Scotland

waterfront

Lowland Canals

Dear Editor,

We have just returned from a most amazing trip on a hire-boat on the Forth & Clyde and Union Canals. The assistance we received from the BW staff on the Forth & Clyde Canal between Bonnybridge and Kirkintilloch, and particularly from Maryhill to Bowling was phenomenal. The trip from Maryhill to Bowling includes 19 locks, which includes the drop lock at Dalmuir, five bascule bridges, two lift bridges and several swing bridges. All these structures had 'water conservation' protection which had to be unscrewed and re-secured. The BW teams who assisted us were unflagging and cheerful, despite the rain.

Our only disappointment during the entire trip was being told that we could not moor in New Port Downie Basin (where the Falkirk Wheel is located) for our last night because "if we let you moor there, everyone would want to do it." So, although the pontoons may have been put in the Basin for that purpose, they certainly weren't available.

Sandra & Roger Silvester, nb Bliss

Dear Editor

I have read with interest the article about Boaters' Facilities in the Spring/Summer edition of Waterfront. You state that shower facilities and all BW operated water points are now free of charge for boat licence holders.

May I suggest that a page be dedicated to listing where these facilities are? I for one would find this most useful.

May I also comment on the article about BW's Veg Pledge. I think that BW has been doing a wonderful job; so far we have certainly noticed a difference. But how do BW employees cope with all the dog mess? As a dog owner who always picks up after my dog I am getting increasingly angry over the amount of dog mess. There are bins but owners don't use them. Fines are in place, but are they ever used? I am really hoping that dog owners who do not clear up after their dog can be made accountable for their actions.

Yours sincerely

Jo Lodge

Boaters' Guides for all BW canals and rivers are now available on-line at Waterscape.com. The Guides feature maps with services and facilities, such as water points and showers, clearly marked. They also include advice on unusual locks and bridges, waterway dimensions and any keys you will need. If you don't have access to the internet please contact the BW Customer Service Centre who will print off and post to you the guide you require.

BW is working towards improving the cleanliness of the towpaths and is grateful to responsible dog-owners like yourself who clean up after their dogs. BW does not have the power to fine people who allow their dogs to foul the towpaths, but local authorities do - where they have classified canal towpaths as 'public open space'. Only about 11% of towpaths are currently classified in this way. Why not lobby your local councillor if you think your local authority could help? We are continuing to install dog bins in partnership with local authorities around the system and will update boaters on any new initiatives.

Gillian Owen,
editor

Debbie Lumb may be correct regarding the long term results of her policy, but the Ashton has been a byword for attacks by local residents for decades, and there is little evidence that this policy is working and it is little comfort when one is under serious attack. Something to protect us is needed NOW. Calling the police does not help because they take so long to arrive, if at all. I noticed that Ms Lumb did not reply to the suggestion that there should be escorted passage on the Ashton, which is probably the best immediate solution. Ms Lumb says that visitor safety is her primary concern, but sadly her reply does not give that impression, or show any sense of urgency.

Ron Bingham

I refer to the response to Mr Hilton's letter in *Waterfront* Issue 9 concerning the incident he experienced last year. The area he travelled through has a bad reputation. Whilst it may be more convenient for BW staff to sit in their offices offering advice on what action boaters should take (contacting the police etc); in the good old days BW had a presence in the known bad spots, all boaters appreciated it and it went a long way to ward off attacks of bad behaviour.

May I suggest that the known trouble spots ie the Ashton and adjacent areas have a BW presence to maintain a watching brief... just like it used to be.

Many Thanks
Frank & Sue May

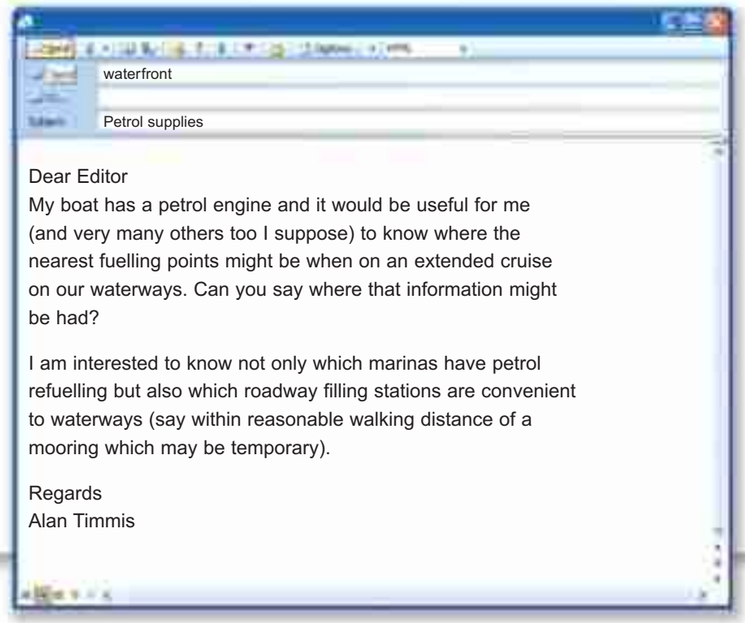
Dear Mr and Mrs May, and Mr Bingham,
Thank you both for your letters regarding the anti-social problems on the Ashton Canal. Both of you have suggested escorted passage through this particular area of canal, but - as Mr Bingham stated - problems have been occurring in this area for a long time and escorted passage through this section was tested in the late 1990's but was not sustainable or wholly effective. We have just recruited a waterway community safety officer, Sue Ashurst, whose main focus over the next two years will be the Ashton and Rochdale canals.

Helping to secure Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) by working with local police and ASBO officers will be a part of this new role, as well as working with community groups and other BW staff. ASBOs restrict offenders from visiting certain areas – which in this case would be the canals. Although we must ensure our customers are safe wherever possible, we must look at tackling the problem at its core, in conjunction with the police and local authorities. Over the past 12 months I have been dealing with local authorities and various police forces to get to the point where the waterway community safety officer's appointment can be made.

This has included everything from gathering evidence for ASBOs and working with Canal Watch Wardens in Manchester City Centre, to helping local community groups set up youth angling clubs in some of the problem areas.

There is no quick fix to this problem, but we expect that by having a member of experienced staff working on this issue full time to secure partnership support and additional resources, we will be successful in creating a safer environment.

Debbie Lumb,
service manager,
North West Waterways


waterfront

Petrol supplies

Dear Editor
My boat has a petrol engine and it would be useful for me (and very many others too I suppose) to know where the nearest fuelling points might be when on an extended cruise on our waterways. Can you say where that information might be had?

I am interested to know not only which marinas have petrol refuelling but also which roadway filling stations are convenient to waterways (say within reasonable walking distance of a mooring which may be temporary).

Regards
Alan Timmis

You can find out which marinas sell petrol using Waterscape.com. Choose the waterway you want, either by using the map or searching, then click 'Boating' and 'Yards and Supplies' on the left of the page. If you don't have access to the internet, a list of boatyard facilities is also available from the BW Customer Service Centre T 01923 201120.

For petrol stations, I'd recommend Pearson's Canal Companions. The colourful maps in these popular cruising guides mark roadside filling stations along with a whole host of other info. You can buy the guides from most waterside bookshops and chandleries, or on-line at Waterscape.com.

Richard Fairhurst,
editor, Waterscape.com (until Sep. 05)

Please send your correspondence to:
The Editor, *Waterfront* Magazine, British Waterways, Willow Grange, Church Road, Watford WD17 4QA or Email: waterfront@britishwaterways.co.uk

The Editor reserves the right to shorten or modify any letters submitted.

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We spent a great deal of time and effort to ensure that our web design house knew exactly what our customers needed and they have provided an excellent, easy to use information portal that not only offers static information, but also gives our customers the facility of electronically down-loading the full colour brochure. The feedback we receive from all visitors to our site is that they rank it as the best brokerage web site. We contribute this success to our understanding of customers' needs and our many years of boating experience, including living aboard. Now customers can view our boats in the comfort of their own home and together with the CD-ROM enjoy a 'virtual' walk through and full details of every room and what is behind the scenes.

Our aim has always been to be the best of the best and to offer an unrivalled service. It has taken many years of research and testing of equipment to bring Boat Finder to the market.

Predominantly, our service is tailored to selling high quality boats from their home moorings. However, we do have brokerage moorings in Cheshire should customers require them. So successful is our video service that many boats sell on the first actual viewing - the average is three viewings. This is due mainly to the quality of information and the video tours we produce. This enables us to get the information to a prospective buyer anywhere in the world quicker than any other broker. This give sellers a much larger catchment area than would normally be available. We have sold boats to many overseas customers. Such is our success that new boat builders are now using our marketing service. We also have a business partnership with River Canal Rescue to provide our buyers with free breakdown assistance to give them peace of mind.

As one would expect, we have also invested heavily in our computer infrastructure and all enquiries are entered onto our database, including their key requirements. This database is regularly cleaned and can give us up to the minute information on our customers' requirements. This is why many of our boats are sold before they even reach the web site.

We are the only broker in the world to offer this type of service. The detailed information and high quality service takes a great deal of time and hard work, but such is our commitment to offer value for money, we charge no more than the more conventional brokers.

We are not complacent and still look at ways to improve our service so that no one can offer better. We are so confident that our service is the best that we say "IF YOU CAN FIND A BETTER, MORE COMPREHENSIVE SERVICE, WE WILL SELL YOUR BOAT FOR FREE". There simply is no better service out there, we know this because we continually compare our offering to that of our competitors worldwide.

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